



OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
SHEILA SIMON

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Chairman Maloney
Illinois State Capitol
401 South 2nd Street
Springfield, IL 62706

Chairman Maloney and Senate Higher Education Committee members,

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony in support of House Bill 5248, known as the Illinois College Choice Reports Act. After touring the state's 48 community colleges and finding that too many students are struggling to complete certificate and degree programs on time and without incurring significant debt, I asked my staff to work with all of the potentially impacted parties to draft legislation. Our aim is to help students make informed choices about higher education so they can successfully enter and complete programs that lead to good-paying jobs in a more timely and cost-effective manner.

HB 5248 requires a committee of higher education stakeholders to design standard College Choice Reports that contain information on such things as net costs, completion rates and job placement rates. This information is already collected by our post-secondary institutions, but the bill requires it be published annually in an easy to find and digest format. Future undergraduates will be able to access College Choice Reports online to comparison-shop between institutions. Think of this new tool as a consumer report, guiding parents and students toward high-quality, affordable higher education investments.

Taxpayers will also benefit from College Choice Reports. Measuring data alone allows us to identify our successes, but sharing this information will allow us to replicate the best our state has to offer across institutions.

As presented, the law would apply to all community colleges, public universities and private higher education institutions approved to operate and grant degrees in Illinois. An initial College Choice Reports model would be completed by January 1, 2014, with the first annual reports to be published or linked to on school websites by January 1, 2015. As chair of the Joint Education Leadership Committee of the P-20 Council, I will receive progress reports on the development.

This renewed commitment to transparency is critical to building a strong economy in Illinois. More than 140,000 jobs are unfilled in our state, yet thousands of our constituents are looking for work. As we work toward our state goal of 60 percent of our working-age population holding college credentials, we will close that gap. College Choice Reports are a low-cost method to help students make the most of their options and compete in the global economy.